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To:

The Editor
The Times
1 London Bridge Street
London SE1 9GF
United Kingdom

Date: 29 July 2025

Subject: Complaint Regarding Misrepresentation of the Western Sahara Conflict and the Polisario Front in Your 20 February 2025 Article

Dear Editor,

I am writing on behalf of **Adala UK**, a UK-based human rights organisation dedicated to promoting justice and upholding international law in Western Sahara. We are deeply concerned by your [article published on 20 February 2025, titled “Christopher Nolan accused of ‘colonialism’ over *Odyssey* shoot”](#), which includes significant misrepresentations of the facts surrounding the Western Sahara conflict and the legal status of the **Polisario Front**.

We respectfully request that *The Times* consider publishing a clarification or correction, in line with the principles of fair and responsible journalism.

1. Mischaracterisation of the Polisario Front

The article refers to [the Polisario Front](#) as a “separatist group” and implies it is engaged in a campaign of “violent resistance.” This is both factually inaccurate and legally misleading.

The **United Nations** recognises the Polisario Front as the **sole legitimate representative of the Sahrawi people**, a position first affirmed in [UN General Assembly Resolution 34/37 \(1979\)](#) and reiterated in subsequent resolutions and UN-led processes. The Polisario Front leads the **Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR)**, which is a founding member of the **African Union** and enjoys recognition by numerous states worldwide.

Describing the Polisario as a “separatist” or “militant” group misrepresents its status and delegitimises a recognised liberation movement engaged in lawful resistance against military occupation, as defined by international law.



2. Inaccurate Account of the 2020 Ceasefire Violation

Your article states that the Polisario “abandoned” a long-standing ceasefire in 2020, without offering necessary context. In truth, the **Moroccan military violated the UN-sponsored ceasefire on 13 November 2020** by attacking Sahrawi civilians who were peacefully protesting in the Guerguerat buffer zone, an act that constituted a breach of the ceasefire agreement. The Polisario Front’s subsequent military response was a reaction to this breach.

To suggest that the Polisario unilaterally escalated the conflict is a misrepresentation of events and distorts the reality on the ground.

3. The UK Government’s Official Position

The article states that Britain has joined the United States, France, and Spain in recognising Morocco’s sovereignty over Western Sahara. This is **incorrect**. In a [formal response to Adala UK](#) dated **25 June 2025**, the **Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO)** clarified that the UK **has not recognised Moroccan sovereignty** over Western Sahara. The UK continues to support a **UN-led political process** to achieve a just, lasting, and mutually acceptable solution that allows for the **self-determination of the Sahrawi people**.

This is a critical distinction and should be reflected accurately in your reporting.

4. Legal Status of Western Sahara

Western Sahara is a **UN-designated non-self-governing territory**, pending decolonisation. The **International Court of Justice (1975)** concluded that no legal ties of sovereignty exist between Morocco and Western Sahara. Accordingly, Morocco’s presence in the territory is considered an **occupation under international law**, and economic and cultural activity in the region—such as international film production—raises serious ethical and legal questions.

5. The Need for Accurate Reporting

Media outlets such as *The Times* play a critical role in informing public understanding of international conflicts. Misleading terminology and factual inaccuracies not only do a disservice to your readership but risk undermining international legal norms and the human rights of a long-oppressed population.

In light of this, and in the interest of journalistic balance, we respectfully request that *The Times* offer a **right of reply** to either Adala UK, a representative of the **Polisario Front**, or an **independent Sahrawi civil society voice** to clarify the facts, respond to the claims made in the article, and ensure the Sahrawi perspective is fairly represented.



We urge *The Times* to:

- **Issue a correction** regarding the legal status of the Polisario Front;
- **Clarify the UK Government's position** on Western Sahara;
- **Accurately present** the 2020 ceasefire breach in line with UN reporting and international law.

We are available to provide supporting documentation or to facilitate interviews with Sahrawi civil society representatives and legal experts.

We thank you for your attention to this matter and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Sidi A

Chair, Adala UK, representative to the United Nations HRC

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